

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE PROPOSES CROW HUNTING REGULATIONS

Regulated hunting for the common crow, established under Federal regulations for migratory species, has been proposed by the Department of the Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service.

Published in the Federal Register on January 30, the new migratory bird rules would permit crows to be taken by sport hunting in the 48 contiguous States during a season or seasons not to exceed 124 days each year, the maximum season allowed under a convention with Mexico. Previous conditions for controlling crows causing crop depredations remain in effect. Common crows do not occur in Hawaii and Alaska.

States would regulate hunting methods, dates, bag and possession limits under the rules proposed by Spencer Smith, director of the Fish and Wildlife Service. Hunting from airplanes or during peak nesting season would not be allowed, and crows could be taken only by firearms, archery or falconry. State regulations could be more restrictive, Smith said.

The Federal Register proposal asked for written "comments, suggestions or proposals" from the public or from agencies before March 23. After that date, official rules may be established across the United States for the first time, although crows have been hunted for many years.

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The proposal climaxed an action taken in March of last year, when the United States and Mexico signed a convention providing further protection for 32 families of birds. The list included Corvidae, a family involving jays, magpies and crows, which brought considerable criticism from crow hunters, particularly in the South and Midwest.

The proposal, an amendment to Title 50, Code of Federal Regulations, was made under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, the authority used to establish regulations on waterfowl and other animals moving across Canada, the United States and Mexico.

The proposal was submitted after discussions with State wildlife agencies and conservation groups last summer and fall. The suggested rules would not require a Federal permit to control depredating red-winged or Brewer's blackbirds, cowbirds, grackles, magpies or crows when these species are preying upon crops or ornamental trees or when they are in such numbers as to constitute a health hazard. But horned owls, also covered under the families protected by last year's convention with Mexico, may be taken only under permit.

"The crow is certainly not an endangered species of wildlife," Smith said, but added that "we must at this point in time assure the crow the protection accorded other migratory game birds."

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